

THE
BELIEVER'S PEARL;
OR, 2.^A
An HUMBLE ATTEMPT
To set forth a
PRECIOUS JESUS,
IN A
GOSPEL LIGHT,
TO THE
VIEW of the CHILDREN of MEN.

*Unto you O Men I call, and my Voice is to the
Sons of Men. Prov. viii. 4.*

*This is the Record that God hath given to us
eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son.*

I Epistle John, Chap. v. ver. 11.

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TO THE
READER.

Friend,

I Here present thee with a few lines, about a person in the knowledge of whom, and acquaintance with, consists thy present and future happiness. Read them with attention : ponder them in thy heart : pray over them in the spirit ; compare them with the written word of God, so shall thou have comfort to thine own soul, and give the glory to that God, who worketh all in all.

I have not written as one that thinks he knows more than others ; nor as one skilful in human learning ; but as one taught to know, that Jesus Christ is my wisdom, righteousness and strength : and when I consider, it is out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, he perfects his own praise ; it emboldens me to put forth, this small token of my love towards him, in recommending him to others. I have here set before thee, that which
my

my hands have handled, and my soul hath tasted ; I neither borrow'd it from authors, nor learned it from men ; but as the Lord hath shewed it to me, so will I speak it to his praise : O despise it not, tho' it be the day of small things, the hand of Zerubbabel is in it : The end is his glory, and the good of souls. The method I own is low ; but it will the better suit the meaner sort, for whose sake it is chiefly intended. I have put it under those heads, which all men value any person or thing as being precious ; and have endeavoured to show that all are to be found in Christ, and no where else ; for he is precious in life, in death, in time, and in eternity : in his person, and all his offices ; in his word, and with his rod ; in his people, and in his ordinances. But lest I keep thee too long at the door, I pray thee to lift up the latch, and enter in ; it may be that thou wilt find some entertainment there, &c.

N. B. I should have enlarged on the various parts of the following subject, but purely for the sake of making it come to a small price ; which if ever it be reprinted, may be enlarged if God permit.



The first Epistle of PETER, second Chapter, and the first CLAUSE of the seventh Verse.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.

IN order to the right understanding of these words, we are to consider the foregoing verses, which are what the Apostle grounds this conclusion on. And we find that he there repeats what God the Father had declared by the prophet, *Isa. xxviii. ver. 16. viz.* That he had chosen Jesus Christ, and laid him for a foundation to build his church upon, that is to convey all spiritual blessings to his people, whom he hath chosen in Christ their head, with the gift of the holy spirit, to work faith and every grace in them: and in this revelation of Christ to the soul, he becomes very precious, in the five following respects,

1. As to his singularity: he being the only one.
2. For beauty: for none with him can compare.
3. For

3. For usefulness : without him we can do nothing.

4. For antiquity : for he is from everlasting.

5. For duration : for he is without end or change.

I begin with the first of these, that it is him alone who is in the work of atonement ; for the offering up himself a sacrifice for the sins of his people, and satisfying divine justice by himself alone, when he trod the wine press of God's wrath ; is what the church triumphant, as well as militant, give him thanks : for, ascribing their happiness to what he is unto them, and what he hath done for them, and in them. This is the one chosen, on whom help is laid ; one that is mighty to save. This is the child born, the son given, on whose shoulders the government is laid, and remains for ever ; and tho' God hath many sons by creation and adoption, yet this is his only son, his elect, in whom his soul delighteth ; equal in nature, power and glory, and as such is set forth to us as the gift of the Father's love. And much consolation floweth to his people from it ; for he that spared not his own son, but delivered him for us all, even unto the death of the cross ; how shall he not with him, freely give us all things ? This is he that hath put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree ; and by the once offering up himself, hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Therefore his glory he will not give

give to another, neither will his people, that have beheld him, thus set forth in the gospel.

Secondly, As for his beauty, who can set it forth? for it is so glorious that we cannot fully conceive of it; but it will best appear, if we consider wherein true beauty consists; and that is best understood when compared with its opposite: and this way the Holy Ghost takes, we find, to convince mankind of their deformity, representing them as all over corrupted, full of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores; and when the church saith that she is black but comely, the former is in herself, the latter as standing in Christ. For through her sight of her sin and transgression, she appears herself to be black, ugly, deformed, and altogether odious: but viewing Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and seeing herself cloathed with his righteousness, she is comely thro' the comeliness he has put upon her. This sight shews her that he excels all others for beauty and perfection, they alone residing in him, and are essential to him. But all other beauty is either created by him, or imparted from him, and depending on him for its continuance, so that he is fairer than the children of men, as the psalmist saith. And the church of old admired his beauty, and describes him under various characters, as one altogether lovely. And the Lord by the prophet, *Isa. chap. xxxiii. ver. 17.* Promiseth them that fear and serve him, that they shall see the King, that is Jesus Christ, in his beauty. And we find that
this

this was the prophet David's chief request, *Psal.* xxvii. *ver.* 4. That he might see the beauty of the Lord, such a sight of him, as St. John speaks of, as he and others had of him; as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And it is well worth our notice, that this view of Christ, is both transporting and transforming. For in that day shall be fulfilled, the saying of the prophet, *Isa.* ii. *ver.* 11. The lofty looks of Man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Then shalt thou see that thou standest in need of such an high-priest, as is the holy and harmless lamb of God; undefiled and separate from sinners. And that it is him, and him alone that hath put away sin, by that pure and perfect obedience he paid both in life and death to the holy laws of God, which thou hast broken. This hath oft refresh'd my soul, to think that he was cut off, but not for himself; for he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

Thirdly; As to his usefulness.

We may consider his usefulness first, to God the Father, in fulfilling the holy law which we had broken; and also in magnifying and approving that law by undergoing the curse thereof. But I intend to be brief, and therefore shall omit proceeding on that head. Only be it known to you, into whose hands this may fall, that God is to be considered as a just God, as well as a Saviour, and hath made known no other

other way of dispensing his mercy to the children of men, but thro' the atoning sacrifice of his spotless son. And be it ever remembered that God was in Christ, (not out of Christ) reconciling the world to himself. There is one thing more, I think, needful to take notice of in this place; that there are some, in this day of gospel light, that are not pleased with any, that do not just go their lengths, with regard to eternal settlements. I hope that such will consider, that all that was settled in eternity, with respect to the salvation of God's elect, is to be applied to them, and wrought in them in time; and if so they and I are agreed. For sure I am that no man can conclude on any solid grounds, that he is elected to salvation, but by being called into the fellowship of God's dear son.

I shall now, as the Lord shall help me, proceed to set forth Christ in his usefulness to the children of men, as considered under the fall; which is the state of all men by nature. And in order to come at the true state of man, we do well to consider what that death was which passed upon Adam in the day of his transgression, and it is plain from the scriptures of truth, that what God had told him would ensue, came to pass; otherwise Adam would not have thought of hiding himself from him that seeth every where; neither would he be afraid or ashamed. For the first Adam was made a living soul, but by sin brought death on himself, and all his posterity; so that all the faculties of

his soul became dead as to any motion godward, and liable to, and deserving of eternal woe and misery for ever. And indeed were this laid to heart, we might expect more purity of doctrine from the pulpit, and the press; fewer play-houses, and places of diversion, were men to consider there is nothing but the thread of natural life, betwixt them and hell. And there it is that Christ becomes to his people as useful, not only in giving himself for them, but as giving life unto them, who were before dead in trespasses and sins. This he preached himself as the life giving, and soul quickening being; for he that hath the son hath life, and he that hath not the son hath not life. And when he hath given them life, he brings them to the light; for he is the light of men. And here are two things that are seen in this light, viz. the purity of Christ, and our deformity: and now the soul loaths itself, and abhors itself for all its filthiness; and sometimes satan besets the soul with despairing thoughts, and sore temptations. But if I am speaking to one in this condition, know for thy comfort, he is near that justifieth; for a bruised reed will he not break, nor quench the smoking flax, until he hath brought forth judgment unto victory. And he is now stripping thee of thy filthy garments, to cloath thee with his perfect righteousness, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear. But beware now for satan, it may be, will come another way, and take thee on the weak side and foil thee; then shalt thou know the usefulness

ness of Christ, as thy strength ; and that thou cannot stand one moment without him. And here give me leave to remark, that I have often wondered at many preachers in our day, who dwell much upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, for a justification, a precious truth, and by no means to be parted with. But is not the imparting and upholding strength of Christ a precious truth also ? and tends much to the comfort and support of a weak and feeble child of God. But to treat of Christ in all his usefulness would be what I could never finish. I shall therefore give a few hints of what he is to his own people.

He is life to the dead : sight to the blind : feet to the lame : ears to the deaf : strength to the weak : health to the sick : cloathing to the naked : food for the hungry : drink to the thirsty, and rest to the weary. For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. He is the head of all things to his church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. He is a king that ruleth in and for them, to subdue all their sins, and all their enemies. He is a priest that hath atoned for all their sins, by the sacrifice of himself, and is ascended to the right hand of the father, to plead the merits thereof, for and in the behalf of his people ; and there remains a priest for ever ; and a prophet to teach and instruct them, not only in their duty, but to make known unto them the great blessings he is heir of, which they shall enjoy through him, by receiving

receiving grace here, and glory with him in the kingdom above, and to be with him, &c. But,

Fourthly; Where must I begin the date of him that is everlasting, for this truth the scriptures abound with concerning him. And I conceive that the father is represented as speaking to him about the making of man; as in *Gen. i. v. 26*, and *Col. i. v. 16, 17*. It is there asserted that all things were made by him, and for him, but I conceive that he is not only precious to his people, as a creator and preserver of them in being, but as one early concerned for their everlasting happiness, and as such he is set forth to us in holy writ. And I confess, I see nothing else that could save Adam, and all his posterity that had their being in this world before the birth of Christ, from the execution of that wrath, due to them as sinners. For Solomon that was filled with wisdom tells us, that Jesus Christ was set up from everlasting, as in *Prov. viii. ver. 23*, and if set up had a being. And we may gather from the apostle Paul's epistles, that here all the blessings of grace and glory, were bestow'd and secured to Gods people, as you may read at the beginning of the epistle to the Ephesians; and also the second epistle to *Timothy*, 1, and 9. And this is him that is the Alpha and Omega; the first and the last. And surely if those gifts of our ancestors which we often value, for no other reason but antiquity, are worth our regard; how much more shall we value and esteem, this unspeakable gift of the father; even Jesus Christ, with all his fullness.

For

For he calls on us, to behold him as such, as a witness of his love, *Isaiah, ly. ver. 4*, But,

Fifthly and lastly; He is without end or change. And here are two things to be treated off: The first I need say little about, for all that acknowledge the true God, own him as an everlasting Being; and this affords great support to all those, who through grace, have stayed their souls upon him. But there are great mistakes about him, with regard to his not changing in his love to his people; or else we should not have such corrupters of the word, spread over the kingdom as there are. And here give me leave to take notice, that it is not for argument sake, but for God's glory, and your souls sake, that I concern myself about it; and tho' there are some that thinks it meet, to let all things alone in which professors differ; I confess, I cannot see it consistent with that love I have for their good; and also for the glory of God; for if we are to buy the truth, and sell it not; we cannot part with the unchangeable love of God, on which our peace and comfort here, and happiness hereafter, doth depend: and I perswade myself, if those men did duly consider, that the moving cause, of God's love towards his people, was wholly from himself, and not from any thing done, or to be done by them, they would see cause to cry with the apostle; O the height and depth! and not measure it by their imperfect love, and obedience towards him. And would not assert that we may be the children of God to day, and the children of the devil to-morrow, placing not only our comfort, but our
eternal

eternal state, upon our doings, and not upon the doings, and sufferings of Christ, on which it doth depend. They would then acknowledge that it is because the Lord changes not, we are not consumed; and sure I am that God who hath laid up a rod in his covenant, will use it to correct his wandering people for their folly, and bring them back by weeping crosses: but he hates putting away, and makes known to his people, that he is married to them; and that his ways are not as mans ways; for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities he will remember no more. For he hath loved them with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness will he draw them. This is that friend, that sticketh closer than a brother, he that hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. And because I live, ye shall live also. Yea I will strengthen thee: I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

I should now give some account of faith, but I think it best known by its fruits. And if Jesus Christ is precious in those respects that have been set before thee, it is a proof that grace is implanted in thy soul. For he is precious to none but believers, others see no form or comeliness in him, that they should desire him. And faith is a self abasing, and Christ exalting grace; going out in love towards him, or confidence and trust in him, and desires of conformity to him. And let it be remembered that where there are no desires after holiness, there is no saving faith, for God put no difference between jew and gentile,
purifying

purifying their hearts by faith. And now many inferences might be drawn from what had been said : but I omit them, and have one request to thee, that is, duly to consider what thou hast read, for as food for the body will not feed, nor nourish it unless it be eaten ; nor cloaths tho' ever so well made, keep the body warm, unless they are put on : so unless what is read be applied to the soul, by the spirit of God, and by meditation and prayer for his blessing, it will not profit the soul. And that God who teacheth to profit, may bless these, and all other means of grace that he favours thee with, is the unfeigned desire of him who subscribes himself, the unworthiest of all Gods servants.

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